

[http://www.theadvocate.com/new\\_orleans/opinion/letters/article\\_cca7beec-60ba-11e6-85b0-f7042f38a814.html](http://www.theadvocate.com/new_orleans/opinion/letters/article_cca7beec-60ba-11e6-85b0-f7042f38a814.html)

# Letters: Public charter schools a big success in New Orleans

BY MARY L. LANDRIEU **AUG 15, 2016 - 6:00 PM**

Over the last decade, New Orleans has served as a promising platform for innovative and effective practices in education reform. With the expansion of high-quality public charter schools and a commitment to citywide choice, we are able to celebrate significant gains in student achievement and school performance.

Today, parents have a greater range of excellent schools serving their children and our school leaders have the opportunity to meet the needs of each child. The evidence is compelling: Public charter schools are reducing dropout rates and increasing college enrollment.

Our high school graduation rate has increased dramatically from 54 percent in 2004 to 73 percent in 2014. Our college attendance rate has more than doubled from 22 percent in 2004 to 59 percent in 2014. More students are graduating high school and enrolling in college than ever before – over half of our graduates were TOPS-eligible in 2014. In addition, African-American males in New Orleans graduated at five percentage points higher than the state average in 2014, achieving one of the highest urban rates of success in the country. This has been the work of many elected leaders, charter school advocates and parents determined to improve the lives of all children in New Orleans.

*Story Continued Below*

While we have much to celebrate, our work is not done until each family has an excellent high performing school in every neighborhood in our city. This is important because schools are more than just institutions of learning; they are special places that bridge neighborhoods and communities and create spaces for love and understanding.

To achieve this, our community must come together to expand early childhood learning opportunities so every child is ready to learn when they enter kindergarten. We must also acknowledge that while higher graduation rates are a noble goal, the real goal is success through college and securing a career for every graduate. Further, we must provide our educators with additional health and social services that are necessary to support the development of “the whole child.” With these aspirational goals in mind, I urge our philanthropists and foundations to continue to give so that we can build on our successes. I ask our citizens to look carefully at the candidates running for election to our School Board this fall; we must choose the right leaders to build on the progress we’ve achieved.

Creating academically excellent, racially and socioeconomically diverse schools in every neighborhood is a tall order and something that has yet to be achieved in any major American city. But it is possible. We must continue to work hard and work together to build on the progress that we have made. Our children’s future and the economic future of New Orleans depend on it.

**Mary L. Landrieu**

**former U.S. senator**

**Democrats for Education Reform, Louisiana advisory board member**

**New Orleans**

### **You May Like**

Sponsored Links by Taboola

**Quiz: We Bet You Can't Name These Black Icons**

Topix Blackbeat

**New Orleans, Louisiana: This Innovative Boston Company Is Disrupting a \$200 Billion Industry**

EverQuote Insurance Quotes

**You're In For A Big Surprise With Your Home If You Don't Fix Your Issues Today**

HomeAdvisor

**These Animal Photobombs Will Will Make You Laugh Out Loud at Your Office**

Zimbio

**The 40 Richest Ever NBA Players and the Women Behind Them**

Viraltide.com

**Congress Gives Louisiana Homeowners Who Owe Less Than \$300-625k A Once-In-A-Lifetime Mortgage Bailout**

LowerMyBills

**Barbi Benton Was Gorgeous In The 70s, But What She Looks Like Today Is Incredible**

IFLife